1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

for a few heaps of stones hidden among the trees on the tops of hills. People visit back and forth freely, except for the control imposed at the customs barrier on the one lorry road. Many people grow vegetables in Nyasaland, where there is more land, and sell them in Northern Rhodesia, where there is a better market.

While this territorial proximity gives rise to a multitude of ties linking individuals across the border, it does not lead to new political relations between the counties with a common boundary. Such political relations as do persist are survivals from the old order. Although the formal structure of the Native Court system, as determined by the Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia Administrations, does not permit it, cases sometimes come on appeal from the Nyasaland counties to Mpezeni. There is official visiting between chiefs across the border, and when the Paramount Chief is short of food he may ask the Nyasaland chiefs to send him a few baskets of maize. But despite the nearness of the Nyasaland chiefs to Mpezeni in spatial terms, their political interests lie mainly in the opposite direction. They are the only two Ngoni chiefs in that district of Nyasaland and most of the chiefs whom they meet are Cewa. Their Administration is separate from that in Northern Rhodesia, their laws are different, and they look towards Zomba rather than Lusaka as the seat of Administrative power. We have noted how Mpezeni I contemplated moving into Nyasaland in 1897. As late as 1922, when the Native Reserve scheme was under discussion, Mpezeni II made some preliminary soundings on moving across the border, but already by 1946 such projects were overshadowed by the prospects of federation for the two countries of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

The people of the two Nyasaland counties are subject to the same general influences as are their Northern Rhodesia neighbours in such matters as increasing dependence on an exchange economy and the development of a cognatic or omni-directional kinship system in which links can be traced through spouses as well as through fathers or mothers. Yet even in economic activity there are significant differences. In Nyasaland, Africans grow tobacco for sale, while the Ngoni in Northern Rhodesia are not able to do so; recruiting for the Rand gold-mines is allowed in Nyasaland and prohibited in most of Northern Rhodesia, including the Fort Jameson area.

The annual meetings of the African Provincial Council of the Eastern Province are attended by representatives from each tribe in the province, two people from Fort Jameson township, the Provincial Commissioner and sometimes a representative of the

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

round to protect the cow and calf, until they were strong enough to go back to the kraal.

The intricate system of ownership of cattle, including the relation between a house and a herd, and between certain herds and the spirits of former great people, was part of a herd-boy's background knowledge. He listened at the kraal gate to the men discussing questions of ownership. When a decision was taken to kill a beast, or sell one, or to transfer one or more at a marriage, or to hand over a beast in payment of a fine, the senior boys knew which group of beasts in the kraal must be driven out to be looked over in order that a selection could be made by the man concerned.

The Ngoni classified their cattle according to age, sex, colouring, size and shape of horns, whether castrated or not, whether in calf or not. Knowledge of the extensive series of names used for these 'classes' of cattle was part of a herd-boy's A.B.C. By the time he was old enough to be told to drive certain cattle out of the kraal, designated by their class, he knew exactly which ones were meant. He could also use the cattle terminology to be precise in telling an owner about a beast which had strayed or one that had a sore hoof, or one that was giving an exceptionally good or poor flow of milk.

Herd-boys learned that cattle constituted a form of wealth, not only by the numbers a man possessed and could display, but also because they were easily realizable assets. Cattle could be sold to pay taxes, debts and court fines; and to pay men working for an Ngoni owner of cotton or tobacco gardens. They learned also that since cattle could be converted into money, the men of the house owning the cattle could use the money to buy cloth. This cloth, the property of the house, was kept and looked after by the senior women, who would lend it out temporarily to young men wishing to dress up smartly to go courting or go on a visit.

In the modern forms of Nyasaland economy it was a

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
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486 562 858 over sixteen are not allowed to leave without a pass from their Native Authority until they have paid tax for one year at home.[1] These laws are quite energetically enforced, principally by the placing of Native Authority police at strategic points along the lorry routes. These police inspect the passes of all passengers on the lorries, and bring offenders before the nearest Native Court.

486 562 The devices adopted to evade these restrictions are much as one might expect. The drivers of the lorries may be won over, particularly by women. A woman may get a lorry driver to say that she is his wife, or even enter into a temporary marriage with him, if she wishes to run away without a ticket. Some people walk to the far side of the police point and then attempt to get on the lorry after the search has been completed. A woman who has a ticket but no pass may pose as the wife of some unaccompanied male passenger.

484 167 The motives for leaving the area are many. Most of the men go to look for work, although a few go away to visit their urban relatives and friends for a holiday. Others go to buy goods that may be unobtainable locally for the time being, such as tools or window-panes, or which they think they can get more cheaply elsewhere, such as bicycles. Many of the women go to join their husbands, but some are fleeing from them, or have grown tired of living at home married to men who live permanently in Southern Rhodesia, and are out to try their luck in the towns.

489 Whereas the outgoing lorries are comparatively empty of goods, the returning passengers are well loaded with belongings. The fares are higher, and the Mtoko–Mtsale service is not free on the northward trip. One of the most important commodities brought in along these

205 routes is the mail. Men working in Southern Rhodesia and elsewhere write home to keep their wives and brothers informed of their whereabouts, and send postal orders to enable their families to buy clothes.

This movement to and from the outside world must be seen in its relationship to the opportunities that exist for employment within the District on the tobacco farms.

Farm Labour

464 249 [361] No village in either of the reserves occupied by the Ngoni is more than 12 miles from a farm. This means that it is possible for a man to work as a labourer on a farm and yet retain a large number of his contacts with his village and chief. In particular, his wife and children

[1] Ngoni N. A. Order 32.

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
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can live in the village and cultivate a garden. The maintenance of contacts is facilitated by the fairly general cessation of work on the farms at the week-ends. Apart from two periods of tobacco slump, the local demand for labour has exceeded the supply ever since the earlier period of European settlement. As early as January 1900 the manager of the North Charterland Exploration Company complained to the Administration that the lack of local labour was very serious, and attributed this to the large number of people who were going away to work in Southern Rhodesia. This theme has been repeated over and over again ever since. The practical effect of this chronic local shortage of labour has been that work on the farms has always been a more easy-going affair than work away on the mines or in the big towns. Men have been able to absent themselves from work to attend to their affairs at home very much as they have pleased. Payment has been either for piece-work or for the number of days worked, so that at one time it was not unusual for a man to take two or three months to complete thirty days' work, for which he had contracted.

Prior to about 1930, there were a few villages located on farm-land, whose inhabitants undertook to work for so many days, with pay, in return for permission to remain on the land. With the completion of the move into reserves, this became rare, and at the present time the bulk of the people who live on farm-land are accommodated in compounds provided for them by the farmer. These people are the labourers on the farm for the time being, their families, and friends. The compound is under the charge of a foreman who is usually an employee of long standing on the farm. On some of the farms there are small gardens, but none of them, as far as I know, permit the keeping of cattle by the labourers. This means that a man with cattle must continue to keep them at home in his village or in the village of a relative. Cattle are still the principal form of investment, particularly for people who cannot spend their capital in building a brick house, so that it is common to find in a village that many of the cattle in the byre are being tended for the benefit of an absent owner who spends the majority of his time away on a farm and who may not even have a hut in the village.

The demand for labour on the tobacco farms varies considerably with the time of year, being greatest from about Christmas until about June. At the same time, the calls on a man to tend his own garden are greatest from about November until May. Farmers therefore try to get labour for a few days at a time from people who live in villages

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
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240 464 [851] [462] near their farms, who go home every afternoon after work and come back the next morning. Others employ women and children, and most boys work intermittently on the farms to earn enough to keep themselves in clothes until they are old enough to go away to Southern Rhodesia. Other boys work in their holidays from school.

466 To some extent people from the same village tend to go to work together in groups on a farm. This is particularly true in the case of the short-term labourers who sleep at home, since the choice of farm is restricted to those in the immediate vicinity of the village. Here sometimes the majority of the inhabitants of a village will turn out under the leadership of the headman of the village and work for three or four days on the same farm. Longer-term labourers may be attracted to a farm by the presence of a foreman from their own village.

584 Girls also go to work on their own, and many marriages are made as a result of encounters on the farms. Marriages made in this way are not always recognized by the parents of the girl until the man has brought her back to her village and formally approached her parents.

441 The villages near the farms, and to a lesser extent those near the township, sell beer to the labourers, while the farms themselves buy up most of the maize and other cereals that villagers have to sell.

464 651 653 [422] The continual demand for labour on the farms leads to their serving as a sanctuary for fugitives from social pressure of one kind or another. For example, a native policeman was going round the villages obtaining labour for the Administration for essential public works. He adopted the normal practice of imposing a quota of labourers to be supplied upon each village and made the headman responsible for seeing that his village quota was met. If the headman did not do this, he enlisted the headman as a labourer. At one village the headman told the policeman that his people had all run away to the gardens when they had heard of the arrival of the policeman in the area. The policeman warned the headman that either he must exercise his authority over his people and order them back into the village so that he could enlist them, or else the headman would be enlisted. He came back the next day to see what had happened, and found that the headman had gone off to work on a farm. There is machinery for recovering such people, but it does not work easily or quickly, and by the time a man has been located and brought back, the reason for which he was wanted may have fallen away.

691 579 Disputes between Africans on farms can be dealt with at the nearest Native Court, but if the farmer wishes to enforce his rights under the

/10 cont'd/

after moving other beans out of a hole. A boys' game played in the wet season is played with egg-shaped pieces of mud, with a small flange at one end. These pieces are thrown down on to the water, and ought to make an explosive noise.

/11/ VII

Maize, the main crop, is planted with the first steady rains in November, and is harvested soon after the end of the rains in April or May. Under the influence of the Agricultural Department of the Government, planting in small ridges following the contour is increasingly practised, but prior to the introduction of this and other new agricultural methods in the 1930s, planting was carried out in mounds about three feet in diameter and eighteen inches high. Finger millet is grown on patches of soil on which branches and garden trash have been burnt. However, the citemene system, as known in other parts of the country, in which trees are felled over a wide area and burnt to fertilise a small area in the middle, is not practised as a principal method here. Finger millet is the only crop to be planted solely in ash fertilised patches, while the rest of the cleared ground may be planted with beans and nuts, and in the following season, with maize. Gardens last from two up to twenty or more years, depending on the type of soil, and the selection of a garden site is determined to some extent by the nature of the soil and of the vegetation growing on it.

In seepage areas, dry season gardens can be cultivated, and it is in such gardens, fenced in to keep out straying animals, that vegetables are grown for sale to Europeans and in the villages. These sites are also used for early planted maize, which is harvested in January and eaten in the form of green mealies. In the villages themselves, small plots of tobacco and castor oil are grown on old house sites, while abandoned village sites are used as subsidiary gardens for maize and other crops. Mango, banana, and pawpaw trees are found in villages and on the sites of abandoned villages.